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Statement submitted by Fondation Ostad Elahi: Ethique et Solidarité Humaine, a non-governmental organization in consultative status with the Economic and Social Council*

The Secretary-General has received the following statement, which is being circulated in accordance with paragraphs 30 and 31 of Economic and Social Council resolution 1996/31.

* The present statement is issued without formal editing.

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Statement

Efforts to promote "sustainable lifestyles" (target 4.7 of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development), respect for human rights, gender equality, a culture of peace and non-violence, citizenship and other objectives are more likely to succeed if they are supported by education in personal ethics.

Experience gathered over a number of years of various syllabuses — including those in professional training colleges and universities — has led Fondation Ostad Elahi: Ethique et Solidarité Humaine to advocate universal education in personal ethics, in particular in the form of continuing education or on-the-job training, where the interconnection between theory and actual practice can be put into effect immediately.

Personal ethics, which can be defined as selfless goodwill and altruism towards others, and, more generally, as the readiness to take into consideration the rights and duties that are engaged in any situation, is a cross-cutting and indispensable dimension of the principles invoked in target 4.7.

To ensure that respect for those principles is real and lasting, it is desirable that it should take the form of the voluntary espousal of the principles and be informed by an understanding of the reasons which underlie them and of the ways in which they should be applied.

This is precisely the role played by the teaching of personal ethics. For this purpose, there must be awareness:

- Of the parameters involved in the ethical or non-ethical features of our actions: whether they are intentional; the nature of the actions; the context in which they are performed;
- The effects of our actions, which take place at two or even three levels: effects on ourselves; effects on others; and, depending on the nature of the action, effects on the environment;
- The processes at work in the psyche when we perform ethical or unethical actions;
- Endogenous and exogenous brakes on and resistance to the performance of ethical actions; ways of identifying these and neutralizing their effects.

This educational process includes milestones in the social or professional contexts specific to each participant, to give a sense of the realities associated with the application of ethical principles.

Thus, in combination with regular and considered practice, which is itself supported by the appropriate self-assessment tools, education in personal ethics has the effect of entrenching such ethics in the individual with increasing levels of understanding, and will lead ultimately to the emergence of the genuinely human qualities called for in target 4.7.

Insofar as it is based on the observation and testing of causal relations, with a view to establishing objective conditions for the development of such human qualities, personal ethics are comparable to a practical science.

An analogy could be made with the effects of food on our bodies: a healthy and balanced diet contributes to the healthy development of the body; thus, the regular and considered performance of ethical actions constitutes an essential component of the healthy development of the psyche, resulting in a personality which is fully fledged, balanced, responsible and attentive to others and to the environment.